Dear USDA Approved Software Company:

Several items need to be addressed in regards to USDA approved software and the Child Nutrition (CN) Database. At issue is the release of future CN databases, a change being made to the CN database format, the timeliness of incorporation of the CN database into your software, and how often USDA reviews your software.

Release of Future CN Database
The eighth release of the Child Nutrition (CN) Database (CN 8) is on target for August 2003. CN 8 will contain a revised Food Buying Guide (FBG) file to reflect changes made to the FBG. As always, I will notify you once CN 8 has been released. After CN 8, we plan on moving future releases to March as previously requested. This will allow the database to be incorporated into the software before the school year begins. We currently plan to release CN 9 in March 2005; thus there will not be any new CN Database release in 2004.

CN Database Format
The format of CN 8 has been changed to reflect the changes made previously to the USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference. The change combines the Measure Description and the Gram Weight files. We will post a file with these changes before we release CN 8. Each company from the approved software list will be notified via e-mail when this file becomes available.

Incorporation of CN Database
USDA has always required the software companies to incorporate all changes of the CN Database into the approved software within 90 days of each new release. This has not always been done and some companies selling USDA approved software have neglected to update the CN Database for substantially longer. While I understand that if the format of the database has changed it requires additional work to incorporate it into the software and this may take some additional time, database changes must still be accomplished in a timely manner.

The CN Database is an important component of Nutrient Standard Menu Planning and schools must be afforded the most recent data available. USDA expects that all software programs have the most current CN Database incorporated within 90 days of the release of the database. If a software vendor needs additional time, the software coordinator must be informed when the update will be completed. If this time frame is not reasonable in the coordinator's opinion, a letter will be written to all Food and Nutrition Service regional offices informing them that the software company in question has been unable to update the database as required by CN regulations and is being removed from the USDA approved software list.

Software Review
It has been our intention to review all USDA approved programs at least once every three years. For several reasons we have been unable to complete these reviews. As a result, we have made changes to our review process so that annually the software coordinator will perform a limited review of all software programs and assure that the current CN database has been incorporated. You will be sent a yearly reminder requesting your software by a specific due date. In addition, a comprehensive review will be done at least once every three years. The software coordinator will review several each year on a rotating basis.

In order to assure that we can perform these reviews each software company must submit their current USDA approved software annually with the current CN Database. The software company must correct any components that fail in the review within 120 days of notification. Failure to correct non-compliant items in a timely manner will result in the companies' removal from the USDA approved software list.

Currently, some software companies have not submitted their updated software for a timely review. To remain on the USDA approved software list, **all companies** must submit the current version of their software containing the current CN database. Any software program not submitted or submitted without the current version of the CN Database by December 31, 2003, will be removed from the approval list and our regional offices notified.

If you have any questions or want to discuss any of these issues please contact Bill Wagoner at (703) 305-2578 or by e-mail at William.wagoner@fns.usda.gov Thank you for your cooperation and continued support.

Sincerely,

STANLEY C. GARNETT
Director
Child Nutrition Division

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